



March 1, 1975

Mr. Larry Gottheim
Cinema Department Chairman
SUNY-Binghamton

Dear Larry,

I am writing in regard to Ralph Hocking, a friend and fellow investigator in the field of video art. His activities, like the Vasulka's, are among the early explorations of video as art and technology, and although we have not as yet had the opportunity to work in close relationship our concerns are of a similar nature.

Let me first describe in general the particularities of the art of video, the codes by which the artistry of video by its nature is made. The existence of the video image is not confined to a particular cultural and historical concept of art presentation, as for example on stage or in a gallery. The art of video that emerged within the direct context of other arts has confined itself to galleries. The video image is a signal viewed in a broad location of society. By the nature of its existence as a dynamic state of energy, it becomes a direct participant or creator of a physical electronic environment capable of interacting with many different locations of the society. In the early stage, the art creates its own tools and tries to specify its own language; it tries to define the relationship to its own industry. The breadth of the reality of the art as signal leads to uncertainties of statements of art. The art need not necessarily confine itself to the capturing of imagery on tape or its presentation within culturally established frameworks. Ralph Hocking is personally engaged in the making of images, but his creative drives are not limited to this interest; he is equally involved in the processes of image making systems. This broad definition of the art is critical to the continued development of this new art form and one which Hocking profoundly supports.

Two people possess crucial significance to the understanding of the personal and social mechanisms of art experiments in video, Brice Howard and Ralph Hocking. Both have descended close to the process of fusion of the elements of the technology with an instinct for human collaboration and respect for talent and with an uncorrupt quality of activities, basic, original, untraditional and unproven. They have established the critical body of experiences and processes in the discipline. Two schools of the art emerged: the west coast school, stressing a mastery of form and definition of video craft, together with an academic recognition and the Binghamton Experimental Center, created by Hocking, with the important democratization of video tools, the creation and maintenance of the notions of art, community, creative hardware and open educational access.



I do not hesitate to describe Ralph Hocking as a person existing in this undefined territory of art, within its most challenging zone, in the dynamic state of creative schism. To me Ralph represent the uncorrupt state of creation. The multilayered interaction within his personality and within the medium and his deep beliefs make him a practical philosopher of video, the actual creator of the spectator which haunts him, a multidirectional dilemma meeting the challenges.

Hocking is a vital force as personal creator within the field. He would be an invaluable addition to the Department and the University, and I recommend him highly. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Cordially,

B. Woody Vasulka
Associate Professor